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## **DIGITAL RESOURCE SHARING AND THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF USERS IN THE SEJM LIBRARY**



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2012. Before, i.a., a specialist in the European Information and Documentation Centre in the Chancellery of the Sejm and the representative of the Chancellery in the COSAC Secretariat during the Polish Presidency in the EU in 2011. In her professional work aims to combine knowledge and experience in different areas in order to help Sejm Library users find the information they need.

**KEYWORDS:** Digital collections. Digitization. Information retrieval languages. Circulation. Information needs.

**ABSTRACT: Thesis/Objective** – The aim of this article is to present the digital resources and databases (bibliographic and authority files) that by means of their online availability compensate for a limited direct access to the Sejm Library's collections. The Sejm Library is a hybrid institution that combines a library, archive, and museum department within a single organizational structure. The authors also discuss selected features of subject cataloging, including the tools used for the description and retrieval of documents, in the context of user services and meeting continuously evolving information needs. **Methods** – The authors used a case study method, based on the content analysis and the authors' own professional experience. **Conclusions** – In reference to the analysis of the information concerning the content of the Sejm Library collections, as well as the information retrieval languages used in its databases, the authors highlight the benefits of combining and integrating three units – archive, library, and museum department – within one institution. The hybrid structure of the Sejm Library appears to enhance the scope of its offer in terms of access to various types of information and sources, thereby responding more comprehensively to users' information needs. Additionally, it facilitates cooperation and collaboration as regards the implementation of joint projects involving the staff and resources of the organizational units that constitute the Sejm Library.

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to present solutions that facilitate access to and searching of the collections of the library of the Polish Sejm (including the Sejm Archive and the Museum Department) through digital resources and databases. The main theme is the use of IT and database tools to improve the cataloging, processing, and accessibility of the collections. Starting from the rules governing the use of the Sejm Library and the Sejm Archive by external (and internal) users, the authors will provide a brief description of the online collections and databases, as well as the specifics of subject cataloging and the information retrieval languages used in the context of serving readers and meeting their changing information needs. The topic concludes with the issue of internal access and the related cooperation between the departments that make up the Sejm Library.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE SEJM LIBRARY

The Sejm Library (hereinafter: SL) is one of the offices of the Chancellery of the Sejm, and since 1989 it has also served the re-established Senate. It also includes the Sejm Archives (hereinafter: SA) – as one of its departments – and the Museum Department (hereinafter: MD). This organizational structure of the library is based on the traditions from the period of the Second Polish Republic and constitutes a pragmatic solution, eliminating the need for multiple collections of certain documents and facilitating archivists' access to source materials stored in the library. The structure of the SL also includes the Collection and Processing Department; the User Services Department, which includes the Media Library; the Collection Storage and Preservation Department; the Social History Collections Department; the Scientific Journals Editorial Office; the Automated Systems Team of the SL; and the Secretariat, along with several independent positions.

The current structure of the Sejm Library was formed in the 1990s. In 1990, the idea of creating a Museum of the Sejm, which had been under development for several years, was abandoned, and the team that had been working on its organization for several years moved to the Sejm Library, forming the Museum Collections Department. Two years later, in 1992, the Sejm Archive was incorporated into the library. Its tasks include, among others, collecting, processing, storing, and making available materials produced by the Sejm, by its organs, by deputies and their offices, and by the Chancellery of the Sejm; acquiring archival materials (or copies thereof) documenting the history of Polish parliamentarism; and preparing editions of sources on this subject. Furthermore, archive staff supervise document management in the organizational units of the Chancellery of the Sejm and provide consultations and training in this area. On the one hand, the Sejm Archive is a department of the Sejm Library, but on the other hand, its tasks, functions, and resources make it a separate unit managed by a head reporting to the SL management. The Sejm Archive belongs to a special group of so-called separate archives, i.e., those that are not part of the network of state archives and are not subject to their supervision. The *Act of July 14, 1983, on the national archival resource and archives* [Ustawa z 14 lipca 1983 r. o narodowym zasobie archiwalnym i archiwum] (Act, 1998) excluded the archives of certain central state bodies, including the Sejm, from the supervision of the General Director of the State Archives and subjected them to the control of the heads of the aforementioned bodies. In the case of the Sejm Archive, these powers are held by the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm.

Within the structure of the Sejm Library, in addition to the Archives and the Museum Department, there is also the Department of Social History Collections, which was established on the basis of the former Archive of

the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party acquired in 1991, and the Media Library (Mediateka), established in the same year. The latter was created in response to the demand from parliamentarians for media information. The task of the Media Library is to record, process, and make available video recordings of parliamentary sessions and important television programs of an informational and journalistic nature.

The Sejm Library serves as both an academic library and a unique national center for parliamentary information. The main collections of the Sejm Library consist of Polish and foreign parliamentary and official publications, as well as publications from selected international organizations. The thematic basis of the book collection is legal issues, in particular constitutional, parliamentary, and administrative law. The library also collects literature on political systems, philosophy and sociology of law, local government, international relations, historical and economic sciences, as well as memoirs and biographies of politicians and social activists. In addition, the Museum, the Archives, and the Department of Social History Collections gather collections related to the functions and tasks of these departments.

The main resource of the Archives consists of documentation of the work of the Sejm and its bodies in paper, electronic, and audiovisual form (audio and video recordings, photographs). Personnel and payroll documentation produced by the Chancellery of the Sejm, parliamentary clubs and groups, as well as regional parliamentary offices is also transferred to the archives.

The Museum's collection consists of exhibits collected since the 1980s related to the history of Polish parliamentarism, including paintings, graphics, maps, old prints, posters, leaflets, drawings, numismatics and phaleristic objects, archival materials, photographs, and military artifacts.

A separate collection is the book collection of the Department of Social History Collections, the foundation of which was the acquisition of books and periodicals from the former Central Archive of the Polish Left, which took place on October 23, 1991 under an agreement between the Director of the Central Archives of Modern Records (Bogdan Kroll) and the Acting Director of the Sejm Library (Andrzej Mężyński). In this way, 150,000 volumes were incorporated into the Sejm Library's resources. The collection is supplemented primarily with publications devoted to the history of social life in Poland, the history of the USSR and the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, and documents of political life in Poland after 1989, reflecting the activities of political parties, trade unions, and other organizations involved in the country's political life.

## RULES FOR ACCESSING THE COLLECTIONS

Access to the Sejm Library's collections is governed by the "Regulations for User Services," updated in 2022. According to these regulations, almost any adult individual or institution whose scientific, professional, or informational needs "can be met by using the unique collections and information resources available exclusively in the Parliamentary Library" may become a user of the SL (Regulations, 2022). Priority access to SL services is given to parliamentarians, members of the Sejm and Senate bodies, parliamentary clubs and groups, parliamentary offices, the Constitutional Tribunal and the State Tribunal, and employees of the Chancellery of the Sejm and Senate. In practice, access to the SL may be temporarily restricted due to security requirements on days when parliament is in session. On these days, the Library and Archive are inaccessible to external users, except in exceptional circumstances.

The catalog for users of the Sejm Library – as well as the accessibility of its collections – are significantly enhanced by digitization and the internet. The same applies to the Sejm Archives, although there are also differences. The regulations governing user access to the Sejm Library do not specify the rules for accessing the archive's resources. These are governed by national archival regulations, such as: the *Act of July 14, 1983, on the national archival resource and archives*, and the *Regulation of the Council of Ministers of June 22, 2011, on the manner and procedure for making archival materials available in separate archives* [Ustawa z dnia 14 lipca 1983 r. o narodowym zasobie archiwalnym i archiwach i Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 22 czerwca 2011 r. w sprawie sposobu i trybu udostępniania materiałów archiwalnych znajdujących się w archiwach wyodrębnionych] as well as internal regulations, in particular the "Instruction on document management in the Sejm Archives." The regulation governs access to archival materials, while the instruction refers to non-archival materials. Access to the archive's resources is granted upon written request from interested parties, specifying the purpose of access and the method of using the documentation. In the case of the Sejm Archives, the consent of the director of the Sejm Library is required. Additional restrictions apply to classified documentation, in which case the consent is granted by the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm. Fewer formalities are required for employees of a given office of the Chancellery of the Sejm to use the documentation of that office – a simple request from the employee is sufficient. The use of documentation for official purposes requires the consent of the director of the organizational unit from which the documentation originates, while observing the regulations concerning the protection of information constituting legally protected secrets. Access to materials collected in the archive is subject to additional restrictions

resulting from separate regulations, such as access to classified information or the protection of personal data. This also affects the scope of digitization and online availability of archival materials.

In the case of museum exhibits, the provisions of the *Act of November 21, 1996, on Museums* [Ustawy z dnia 21 listopada 1996 r. o muzeach] apply, as well as internal regulations and rules including the *Regulations for the organization of exhibitions in the Chancellery of the Sejm adopted on the basis of Order No. 36 of the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm of October 7, 2016* [Regulamin organizacji wystaw w Kancelarii Sejmu przyjęty na podstawie Zarządzenia nr 36 Szefa Kancelarii Sejmu z dnia 7 października 2016 r.]. One of the main tasks of the Museum Department of the Sejm Chancellery, in addition to creating a collection of historical sources related to the history of Polish parliamentarism, is the preparation of exhibitions commemorating historical anniversaries. Temporary exhibitions, presented mainly in the space of the Sejm buildings, constitute the basic form of presentation and public access to the museum collection, as it does not have a permanent exhibition. Exhibitions organized by external entities with the consent of the Speaker of the Sejm are also shown in the Sejm building. The Museum Department of the Sejm very often participates in their preparation.

Access to the SL and SA collections, and the ability to search them, have been enhanced thanks to computer technologies, digitization, and the internet.

## AUTOMATION AND COMPUTERIZATION

The use of computer tools has significantly contributed to improving many processes related to the cataloging, processing, and sharing of collections. Automation in the Sejm Library has a long history, dating back to the 1970s. At that time, a project was launched to build and implement the parliamentary information system "Forum" (later renamed "Legislation"), in which the library played a key role (Sadoch, 2019, p. 111). The concept of the system was developed by a working group established under an agreement between the Minister of Science, Higher Education and Technology and the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm on September 22, 1972. The team was headed by Professor Roman Kulikowski, Deputy Scientific Secretary of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Director of the Computing Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The system was intended to support the work of the Sejm, among other things, through comprehensive information services for members of parliament, parliamentary committees, and the Presidium of the Sejm, as well as the automation of library activities. An important stage was the inclusion of the Sejm Library in 1974 in the nationwide project to create the System of

Scientific, Technical and Organizational Information (SINTO), coordinated by the Center for Scientific, Technical and Economic Information and the Institute of Scientific, Technical and Economic Information. As part of this project, the Sejm Library undertook to develop and implement the concept of an automated information system "Sejm Library – Central Center for Legislative Information" (from 1980 "Legislative Information System of the Sejm Library"). In connection with this task, the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm established the Informatics Laboratory in 1974, placing it within the structure of the Library. The work on SINTO involved the creation of several subsystems, including the Central Catalogue of Legal Literature, for which the Sejm Library was responsible. At that time, work also began on automating library processes. In 1974, at the request of the director of the Sejm Library, specialists from the Main Library and the Scientific and Technical Information Center of the Wrocław University of Technology, then the most important center for library automation, analyzed the functional and organizational structure of the Sejm Library, its book collection, catalogs, and card indexes, as well as its participation in the "Forum" system. Based on this analysis, a *Concept for an IT system for the needs of the Sejm Library* [Koncepcja systemu informatycznego dla potrzeb Biblioteki Sejmowej] was formulated (Sadoch, 2019, p. 115). However, the outlined plan was not implemented, and another attempt in this area was made in 1977. This time, the system analysis of the Sejm Library was carried out by a team composed of employees from the Institute of Scientific, Technical and Economic Information, the Institute of Computer Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and representatives of the Sejm Library. The crisis of the late 1970s and subsequent changes in computer technology contributed to the postponement of the automation process of the Sejm Library. However, it should be noted that participation in these projects resulted in experience that was used to intensify work on computerization at the beginning of the 1990s. This period coincided with systemic changes in the country and a revolution in the field of computer hardware and software. The assistance provided to the Chancellery of the Sejm and Senate by the United States Congress also played a significant role. This assistance included, among other things, numerous library materials, computer equipment and software, printers, photocopiers and scanners, as well as specialized training and study visits for employees of parliamentary services, including information and library services. In 1992, the Chancellery of the Sejm decided to computerize and automate the Sejm Library, which resulted in the purchase of appropriate computer equipment and a library system. Due to its wide range of functions encompassing all basic library operations, the Aleph system was chosen. After appropriate methodological and organizational preparations, in 1993 the first module of the integrated Aleph library system, the

cataloging module, was installed and implemented at the Sejm Library. In subsequent years further modules were added, and in 1995 work began on making resources available online and adding graphic files and full texts of documents. These were the first steps towards digitization. However, before the actual digital projects began, the Sejm Library already had a whole series of databases in the Aleph system. By 2022, this number had increased to 16 (including 15 available to all users in the OPAC WWW). (Report, 2023, p. 8).

### BIBLIOGRAPHIC, INFORMATIONAL, AND FULL-TEXT DATABASES

The main database in the Aleph system is the main catalog. It consists of bibliographic records created in the SAFO-SL format<sup>1</sup> and contains a bibliographic description of the documents and their content characteristics, expressed in two information retrieval languages – the subject heading language of the National Library and the SL's own descriptor language (STEBIS thesaurus system). The older part of the collection is registered in *The card catalog of books from the main SL collections* and *The card catalog of books from the ZHS Department*, as well as *The catalog of old prints* [Katalog klamrowy książek ze zbiorów głównych BS i Katalog klamrowy książek ze zbiorów Wydziału ZHS oraz Katalog starych druków] The first contains scanned images of catalog cards for items published before 1979 from the traditional (card) catalog. Indexes containing information provided on the card, such as author(s), title, and call number(s), have been added to the catalog cards. The second catalog includes scanned images of catalog cards for books from the ZHS Department collections published before 1994 from the card catalog, with similar indexes.

In addition to catalog databases, the Aleph system also supports information and digital resource databases. These include two databases of audiovisual recordings maintained by the Media Library (Mediateka). One is a database containing audiovisual recordings of Sejm sessions, which have been recorded by Media Library staff since the 1st term of the Sejm (1991-1993), and the other is a database of recordings of television programs on political, social, and economic topics from the last six months. Recordings of broadcasts are systematically deleted, and the freed tapes are reused for subsequent recordings.

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<sup>1</sup> The SAFO format is based on the UNIMARC standard, and the predecessor of SAFO SL was a version of the format prepared for the National Library. The adaptation of the format for the needs of the SL was carried out in 1995 by Zofia Moszczyńska (see J. Franke, SAFO SL Format, "Przegląd Biblioteczny" 1996, no. 4, p. 368).

A similar function is performed by a database containing information about articles concerning socio-political and legal issues chosen from 15 selected Polish periodicals, including national daily and weekly newspapers. The database contains links to the full texts.

One of the older databases, which is no longer updated, is a full-text database presenting the implementation of EU law in Polish legislation during the 4th-8th terms of the Sejm (*Lawns implementing EU law – UST database* [Ustawy wykonujące prawo UE – baza UST]). It will be discussed further in the text below. At this point it is worth noting that it consists of metadata of documents reflecting the implementation of European Union law in Polish legislation and the adaptation of Polish legislation to the EU legal order. It contains bibliographic descriptions of Polish and EU legal acts, which are interconnected to allow navigation between related acts. The descriptive metadata includes links to the full texts of legal acts located on other parliamentary websites and on the websites of EU institutions. Originally, the database was updated and modified by the team of the European Information and Documentation Centre (OIDE), which from 2002 to 2018 was one of the departments of the Sejm Library. Currently, due to organizational changes in the Chancellery of the Sejm, the OIDE team has been incorporated into the Office of Parliamentary Analysis, but still oversees this database (Bednarczyk, 2023, p. 12).

Full-text databases include a service consisting of Polish translations of the fundamental laws of many countries, registered in the Aleph system. The Sejm Library prepares the texts of constitutions for publication in the “Constitutions of the World” series published by the Sejm Publishing House. The database also presents Polish constitutions – including digital copies of the oldest ones from 1791, 1807, and 1815, the originals of which are in the collections of the Sejm Library. In addition, the database contains official translations of some documents of international organizations: the UN, the Council of Europe, NATO, and the International Labour Organization. In the library system, descriptive metadata (bibliographic and subject) are combined with digital copies of documents. Many records with bibliographic descriptions have links to documents in hypertext format, in a structural and hierarchical arrangement, which significantly facilitates navigation through the document. Access to the database is possible both through the OPAC and from the Library’s website, more precisely from a service in the form of an alphabetical list of countries presented as hyperlinks leading to the texts of constitutions along with selected translations. This makes navigation through the service simple and intuitive.

The Sejm Library offers users free access to electronic versions of subscribed journals, also accessible from the level of the relevant records in the computer catalog. Similarly, the electronic information service on

new acquisitions of the Sejm Library, available in interactive form on the Aleph system database selection page, provides a direct link to catalog records and functions.

## DATABASES WITH DIGITAL OBJECTS

Conceptual work on digitization, understood as the introduction of analog materials (scans) into computer memory along with their descriptive metadata, began at the Sejm Library in the late 1990s. Over the following decades several databases containing metadata and scans of digitized objects were created. The Sejm Library's digital collections do not constitute a separate service that would function as a digital library or repository. The Aleph system performs a similar function, enabling the management of digital collections and their presentation on a local network or the internet. Only a part of the museum collections in the form of digital copies constitutes a separate service – the "Virtual Museum."

One of the first digital projects undertaken by the Polish Parliament Library was the digitization of parliamentary interpellations from the period of the Second Polish Republic. Work began in 2002, using the library's own materials and resources from other institutions obtained through research. The project was gradually supplemented with other documents, such as printed materials and stenographic reports. The entire collection forms the "Parliamentary Documents 1919-2001" database. Interpellation records contain information about the number, title, authors, and recipients of the interpellation, as well as a content description in the form of descriptors from the STEBIS thesaurus system, and links to corresponding stenographic report records. Each record includes a digital file (PDF) containing the digitized text of the interpellation. Records for other parliamentary materials available in full-text format in the database are similarly structured, including: printed materials, reprints, regulations, and stenographic records with indexes from sessions of the Sejm, Senate, The National Assembly (1919-1939, 1989-2021) and the State National Council (1943-1947). Work is still underway on the digitization of bulletins from the meetings of parliamentary committees of the 1st term of the Sejm (1991-1993), which will eventually enrich the database. These are not yet available to external users.

The Sejm Library also provides digital versions of the documentation of the Codification Commission of the Republic of Poland and its subcommittees from 1919-1939, as well as bulletins of the Constitutional Committee of the National Assembly from 1992-1997. These do not form a separate database, but scans of the documents in PDF files are linked to the bibliographic descriptions in the computer catalog. A similar situation

exists with the transcripts of the Round Table meetings in 1989, prepared by the National Council of the Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth. It is worth adding that these transcripts, along with audiovisual recordings of the Sejm sessions of the 10th term (1989), are presented on the "Time of Transition" pages located on the Sejm's website.

A separate database consists of documents relating to political and social life, comprising various types of leaflets, brochures, and posters reflecting the activities of political parties, trade unions, and other organizations active in the country's political life after 1989. Similarly to the parliamentary documentation, the descriptive metadata contained in the catalog descriptions in the Aleph system are accompanied by digital reproductions in the form of PDF text files or JPG/PNG image files.

A similar presentation method, but with a slightly different metadata standard, was used for the database of photographs from the Sejm Archive. The photographs provide visual documentation of the work of the Sejm and its bodies, mainly from 1993 onwards. They depict events and meetings in which the Speakers of the Sejm and parliamentarians participated. Photo descriptions are entered into the database using the MARC21 standard with modifications dictated by the need to adapt the bibliographic data cataloging format to the needs of archival description. Digital reproductions of photographs or born-digital photographs in JPG format are attached to the description record. Due to copyright protection and regulations concerning the availability of archival documentation, access to digital copies of the photographs is limited to thumbnails supplemented with the annotation: "Access to, including copying of, archival material requires the written consent of the Director of the Sejm Library. (Order No. 8 of the Head of the Chancellery of the Sejm of March 8, 2013, on the introduction in the Chancellery of the Sejm of instructions on the organization and method of carrying out tasks in the Sejm Archive)." (Bednarczyk, 2018, p. 54).

The digitization process aims to both protect the analog originals and facilitate access to them. This also applies to materials that are not intended for open access on the internet. These include, for example, inventory records in the form of handover and receipt lists of materials transferred to the Archives. These are both registered in the Aleph system and digitally preserved in the form of a scan attached to the descriptive record. Only Archives staff have access to them. Similarly, audio and audiovisual archival materials in the form of recordings of parliamentary sessions are subject to gradual digitization. Analog audio cassettes and tapes are systematically copied to digital media and secured on appropriate servers. Access to them is governed by the general rules established for archival materials. A user who has obtained the Director of the Archives'

permission to access archival recordings receives a digital copy of the requested recordings.

A special form of database is the aforementioned *Virtual Museum*. It is managed by the Museum Department. The portal presents a selection of the most valuable objects from the SL museum collections along with their descriptions. Access to it is possible directly from the SL website (Digital Collections tab) or at a separate internet address. The digital resources of the SL also include digital documentation of some exhibitions prepared by the Museum Department as part of its own or co-organized exhibitions, presented in the Parliament building. Visual documentation (sometimes also audiovisual) related to the exhibitions is available on the Library's website.

## REFERENCE DATABASES

Another group of computer databases in the Aleph system consists of reference databases: "Polish Deputies and Senators," "Thesauri of the Sejm Library," and "Subject Heading Language – General Names." The first of these serves as a reference file for the database of Polish parliamentarians and the database of recordings of Sejm sessions. This means that the data is incorporated during ongoing work on the aforementioned databases. The service was created and is being supplemented using materials collected since 1993 in the Sejm Library (Sejm Archive) for subsequent volumes of the biographical dictionary *Members of Parliament and Senators of the Republic of Poland 1919-1939* [Posłowie i Senatorowie Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1919-1939], published by the Sejm Publishing House. It was created in response to the needs of users seeking information about parliamentarians from the Second Polish Republic. Such information is often sought by descendants or relatives of parliamentarians conducting genealogical research, as well as individuals applying for Polish citizenship. This most often concerns people from the East in pre-war Poland, descendants of former exiles or displaced persons. The database contains rich factual material structured in the form of biographies of parliamentarians of the Second Polish Republic (deputies and senators) and basic information in the case of deputies of the Third Polish Republic. Work is underway on biographies of members of the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic (and the State National Council, the Legislative Sejm of 1947-1952 and the 10th Sejm 1989-1991).

The biographies are formulated in an encyclopedic style, concisely and in a keyword-based format. Additionally, they are enriched with images and biographies of selected Speakers of the Polish Sejm from various historical periods, including: the Sejms of the First Polish Republic (1493-1795), the Sejms in the Polish territories during the post-partition era (1795-

1918), the Sejms of the Second Polish Republic (1918-1945), the Legislative Sejm (1947-52), the Sejms of the Polish People's Republic (1952-1989), and the Sejms of the Republic of Poland (after 1991). Usage statistics show that this is one of the most popular databases among users of the Sejm Library's services. Work is underway to standardize the format of the records in its individual sections, which requires solving many IT-related problems, but ultimately aims to increase the accessibility of the database for users.

Databases related to information retrieval languages are of exceptional importance for effective cataloging and, consequently, for searching for information. Their function is linked to the specific nature of subject-based cataloging of library collections.

### SPECIFIC FEATURES OF SUBJECT CATALOGING IN THE SEJM LIBRARY'S COLLECTIONS

Subject cataloging of monographs in the Sejm Library is conducted in two information and retrieval languages: the National Library's subject heading language and the Sejm Library's Thesaurus System, which provides greater search capabilities for both librarians and external users, and also facilitates catalog maintenance after the introduction of new terms. In addition to the Sejm Library's Thesaurus System (STEBIS), created since 1993 under the direction of Dr. Ewa Chmielewska-Gorczyca (since 2012, her work has been continued by Maria Górska), monographs are also described using terms from the National Library's subject heading language, which has not been further developed by the National Library (BN) after 2017. The Sejm Library has retained this solution primarily to avoid losing the benefits associated with the differences between the two languages used in the Library. The process of creating the so-called National Library descriptors indicated that replacing the National Library's subject heading language (SHL) with National Library descriptors in the Sejm Library's catalog would, at best, be a duplication of the already used STEBIS descriptor language. More importantly, the new language had shortcomings and weaknesses related to its creation phase, stemming, among other things, from the automatic division of long National Library subject headings into short units. Meanwhile, STEBIS is already a mature system, currently being developed where updates are required. The continued use of a language that has lost its main development center requires more attention, but still allows for the advantages of subject cataloging in two different languages. It is worth remembering the enormous number of monographs previously compiled in both languages – when converting the SHL BN classification system to BN descriptors, in addition to the obvious drawbacks mentioned above, many technical problems would certainly have been unavoidable.

Ultimately, the decision was made to continue using the SHL BN system, which is still being developed as needed for the Sejm Library collection by individuals with appropriate education and experience.

There are no perfect information retrieval languages. It is important to be aware of the strengths and obvious advantages, but also the shortcomings of individual languages. Therefore, it is obvious that when using two information retrieval languages for subject description in one library, it is advisable to choose languages that are as different as possible, having as few common features as possible. Of course, it is not possible to avoid almost identical search characteristics in some descriptions, but there is a chance that for the majority of the collection, complementarity will be achieved, where one of the languages proves more useful for accurate description and provides a detailed characterization (Górska, Horodyska, Pawłowska, 2015). The subject heading language of the National Library of Poland is used exclusively in the main catalog. STEBIS, on the other hand, is used in the main catalog and (to varying degrees) in the following databases: - Articles from selected Polish journals,

- Recordings of television programs,
- Laws implementing EU law – UST database,
- Polish parliamentary documents 1919-1991,
- Texts of constitutions and other documents.

It is also sometimes used as an auxiliary tool in internal databases, e.g., in the Museum Department.

Both languages used in the Sejm Library's cataloging system can be accessed in the databases on the library's website (in the section on standard databases). STEBIS is available there in its entirety as the *Thesauri of the Sejm Library* [Tezaurusy Biblioteki Sejmowej], and the subject and formal headings of the JHP BN system used in the Sejm Library are listed there under the heading *Subject Headings – General Terms* [Język hasel przedmiotowych – nazwy ogólne].

The concept of the Polish Sejm Library's Thesaurus System is very user-friendly. A consistent system of search terms linked by hierarchical and associative relationships facilitates access to the most relevant entries. The rules applied to the creation of this system (e.g., limiting the number of micro-thesauri within each thesaurus to ten, or limiting the number of levels to four, which for obvious reasons does not apply to geographical terms) increase clarity. Polyhierarchies (the possibility of assigning one descriptor to two or three broader terms) and the use of AND and OR cross-references intuitively support search precision.

Work on STEBIS began at SL in 1993 with the translation of the European Parliament's multilingual thesaurus, EUROVOC, into Polish. To this day, EUROVOC remains part of the SL's descriptor language dictionary (at the end of 2023, terms from EUROVOC constituted approximately 58%

of the total number of STEBIS descriptors). Updates to the European Parliament's thesaurus are incorporated into the STEBIS update process, although not always 100%, as exemplified by the terms "remote work" (still listed as "teleworking" in EUROVOC) and "remote learning" (still listed as "distance learning" in EUROVOC). After more than 30 years, the database is being developed at a steady pace, serving librarians and readers (100-200 new entries annually, constantly increasing cross-references, new scope notes, and associative relationships). New entries are primarily dictated by the need to address increasingly popular topics and also serve to alleviate the burden on the most popular entries (e.g., by dividing a topic into time periods). The needs of other STEBIS users who utilize the SL's thesauri in their databases are also taken into account

#### THE UST DATABASE AS AN EXAMPLE OF CHANGES KEEPING PACE WITH THE TIMES

Reference databases are an extremely important element in the work of the Sejm Library. They develop in a predictable way to best serve as a source of information. At the other end of the scale are databases that develop much more dynamically, responding to important current needs and undergoing significant changes along with them. An example of this second option is the history of the UST database, which presents the implementation of EU law in Polish legislation during the 4th-8th terms of the Sejm (2001-2019). The UST database initially illustrated the adaptation of Polish law to EU law at the legislative level (in the work of the Sejm), and after Poland's accession to the EU in the implementation of EU law in the work of the Sejm. This database was initially created as a diploma thesis by one of the Sejm Library employees (the system administrator of Aleph also helped in the implementation of the idea). When the need for an official version arose, the initial database was improved and expanded. Shortly before Poland's accession to the EU, the European Information and Documentation Center took over the management of the UST database and continued to manage it until the Center was dissolved in 2018. The database did not document the government stage of legislation, but its content reflected the fate of projects implementing EU law in the work of the Sejm. It complemented well the e-step database (created thanks to Norwegian Funds, currently managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs),<sup>2</sup> illustrating implementations at the government level. The UST database had significant added value. Related EU legal acts were added based on information from the explanatory memoranda to the laws, and the factual

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<sup>2</sup> *Electronic System for the Transposition of European Law* [online]. [Accessed: September 23, 2024]. Available at: <https://estep.kprm.gov.pl/mz-citizen-web/home.seam>.

description using thesaurus terms from the SL thesauri improved search capabilities. When interest in issues concerning Poland in the European Union was very high and relatively widespread, the UST database supported searches related to legislation at the parliamentary stage. Over time, interest in these issues decreased. The quality of data concerning national implementation measures in the EU's EUR-Lex database improved, and the main focus of those interested in the implementation of EU law in the work of the Sejm shifted to examining subsidiarity. Currently, the implementation of EU law in Polish legislation can be tracked in the EUR-Lex database and directly on the website of the Polish Sejm (draft laws implementing EU law are marked "EU" in the overview of draft laws that have been submitted). In addition, at the end of each parliamentary term, a list of draft laws implementing EU law covering the completed term is created, also available on the Sejm websites. The examination of subsidiarity, in turn, is supported by the IPEX database, the parliamentary part of which is supplemented by employees of other offices of the Chancellery of the Sejm.

## INTERNAL SHARING AND COLLABORATION

Bringing together employees from three specialized units (archivists, librarians, and museum professionals) in one office offers many advantages, but also imposes limitations – primarily technical ones, related to using a single system for cataloging and processing diverse collections. Aleph is a comprehensive system, and additional modules can be purchased (in the case of the Sejm Library, Primo, which facilitates searching in databases), but it is not necessarily user-friendly, especially for archivists and museum professionals. The main disadvantage of Aleph from a professional perspective is its obvious specialization, favoring the library catalog as well as other databases to varying degrees.

The main advantage of bringing these three units together in one office is the possibility of easy, direct collaboration. This is facilitated by working in the same building and by tasks that often complement and overlap. An excellent example of this is the "Polish Deputies and Senators" database. As a rule, the Archive Department is responsible for the older part (parliamentarians of the Second Polish Republic, Speakers of the Sejm of the First and Second Polish Republics), while the Subject Cataloging Department of the Library is responsible for the part from the State National Council to 1991 and for updating the biographies of contemporary Speakers of the Sejm. Contemporary data (i.e., subsequent terms of the Sejm of the Third Polish Republic) are supplemented by employees of the Automated Systems Team of the Library. This third part

is to be developed during the reorganization of the database, along with the standardization of the record format across all eras up to the present day.

For several years, a group of about fifteen employees from various departments of the Sejm Library has been working on updating the dates of birth and death of members of parliament from various terms, from 1989 to the present day, which is useful for numerous internal parliamentary inquiries.

Good knowledge of the tasks and specializations of individual employees helps in efficiently redirecting questions and better preparing answers to inquiries. Thanks to this cooperation, larger projects can be implemented more efficiently, such as the digitization of the files of members of the State National Council, the Legislative Sejm of 1947-1952, and the first term of the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic (PRL), stored in the Central Archives of Modern Records. The inquiry was prepared jointly by the Archive and Subject Cataloging Departments, and then the digital copies were made by employees of the Automated Systems Team of the Parliamentary Library. Based on the collected materials, many additions were made to the records in the database of Deputies and Senators, and these were subsequently used repeatedly when conducting further inquiries.

## SUMMARY

Based on the information presented, it can be argued that the Sejm Library is an example of a well-functioning institutional hybrid. Although the word itself may have negative connotations, in this case it accurately describes the multifaceted nature of the Sejm Library's activities, which combines a library, archive, and museum into one organism. This structure significantly expands the range of services offered and more comprehensively meets the information needs of users. It is also important to note that the Sejm Library's profile primarily attracts users associated with parliamentarianism, politics, law, and history, who seek reliable, properly documented, and well-organized sources. Due to the Sejm Library's location within the Parliament building, access to the collections is sometimes restricted, which is compensated to some extent by digital resources presented online or transmitted electronically to specific users.

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